

# *Marine Corps Support Facility-Blount Island: Integrated Natural Resources Program Successes*



E2S2 Conference

May 12, 2011

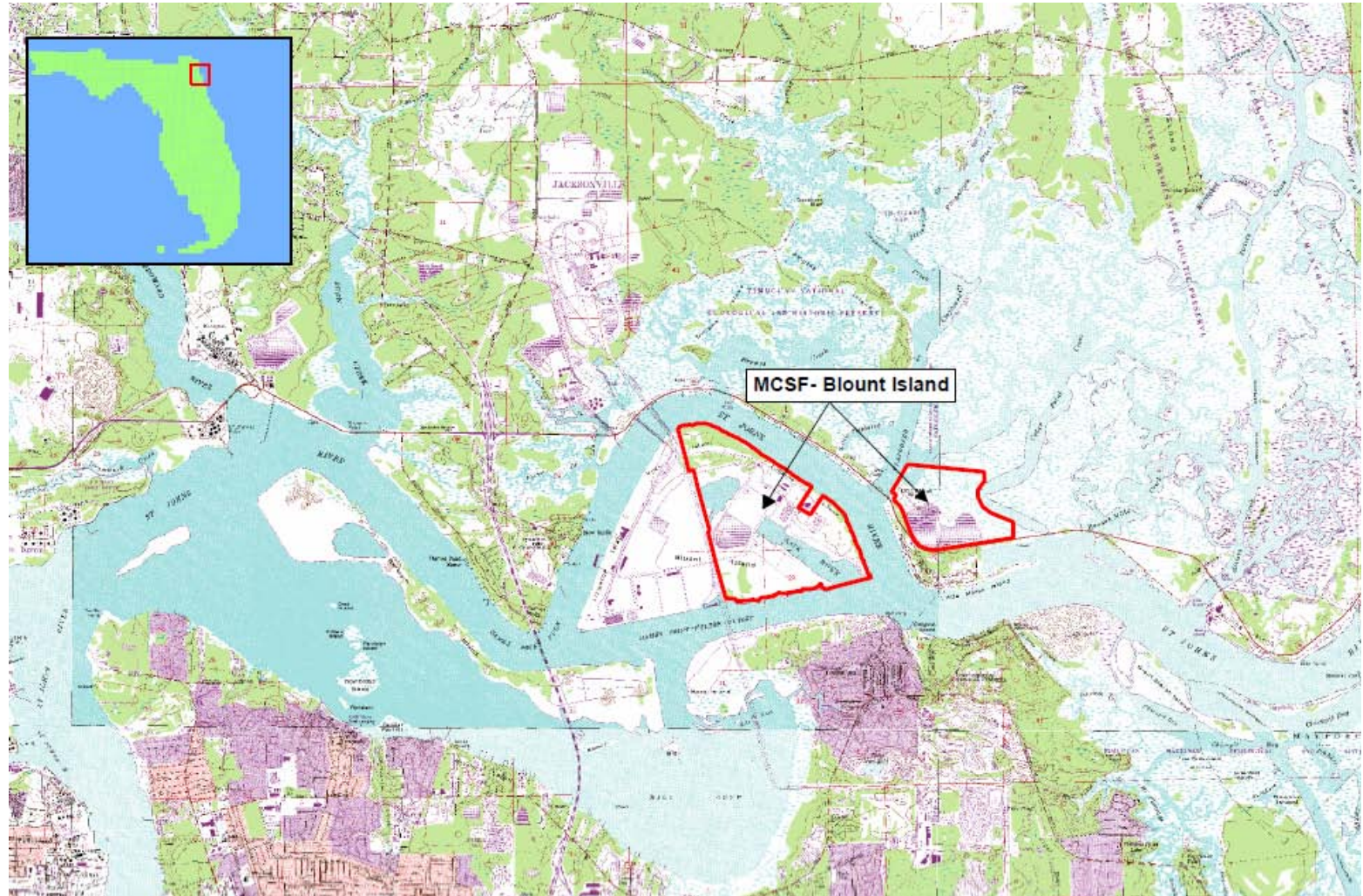
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# *Location*





# *Mission*

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The mission of Marine Corps Support Facility  
– Blount Island (MCSF-BI) is to plan,  
coordinate, and execute logistics efforts in  
support of the Maritime Prepositioning  
Ships Program and the Marine Corps  
Prepositioning Program, Norway





# *Blount Island History*

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- Created as a spoil island for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredging in St. John's River in the 1960's
- Property turned over to the Jacksonville Port Authority (JAXPORT) to develop
- Eastern half of Blount Island sold to Gate Maritime, then acquired by the Marine Corps in 2005



# *Marine Corps Support Facility – BI*

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# ***MCSF-BI Area***

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- MCSF-BI consists of
  - 902 acres located on the eastern half of Blount Island
  - 334-acre dredge disposal area (DDA) is part of located on the east bank of the St. Johns River





# *Blount Island*





# *MCSF-BI Land Use*

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- Developed property consists of 686 acres of military facilities and associated infrastructure (e.g. stormwater ponds)
- Undeveloped areas include:
  - 216 acres on Blount Island
  - 334 acres at the DDA



# *Land Use*





# *Natural Resources Significance*

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- Located along Atlantic flyway for migratory birds
- Contains freshwater and estuarine wetlands
- Habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species including manatee, birds, American alligator and gopher tortoise





# *INRMP History*

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- Initial INRMP for MCSF-BI signed in 2007
- Participants
  - Federal Agencies
    - USACE, USEPA, USFWS, NMFS, NPS
  - State and Local Agencies
    - FDEP, FFWC, OCHP, St. John's Water Management District
    - City of Jacksonville, JAXPORT
  - Public



- INRMP Focus:
  - Inventory natural resources
  - Protect and enhance wetlands and riparian areas
  - Survey migratory birds and wildlife
  - Control invasive plant and pests
  - Protect and enhance sensitive species
  - Develop GIS and integrate environmental planning
  - Integrate INRMP with grounds maintenance
  - Evaluate recreation and education opportunities



# *Natural Resources Inventories*

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- Initial accomplishments focused on documenting resources present:
  - Protected species/habitats survey in 2005
  - Wetland delineation in 2008
  - Gopher tortoise surveys in 2008, 09, 10 and 11
  - Eastern indigo snake survey in 2009
  - Alligator surveys in 2009, 2010
  - Bird surveys in 2008, 2009, 2010
  - Invasive plant surveys in 2008, 2009, 2010



# *Wetlands and Riparian Areas*

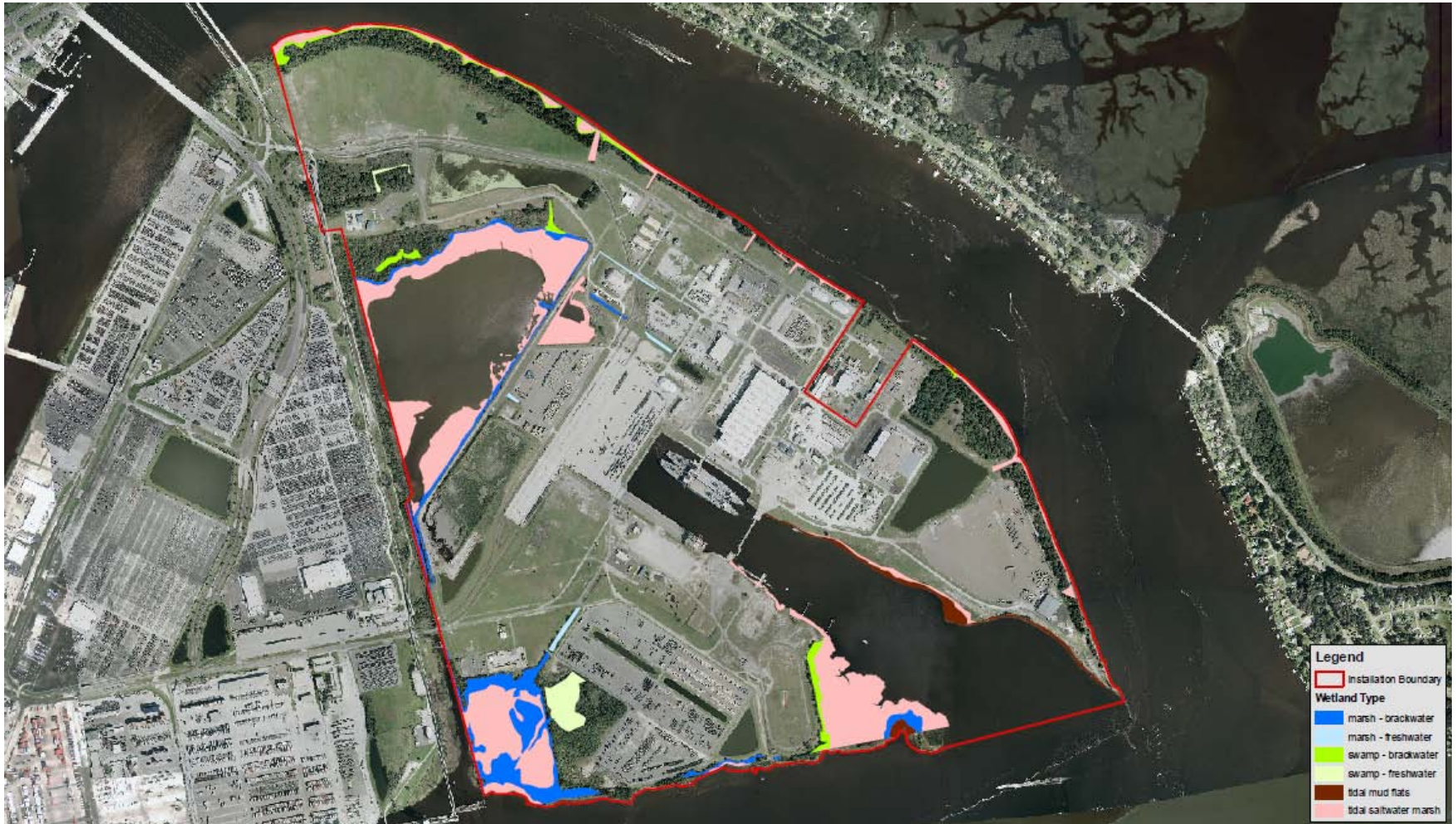
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- Wetland and riparian resources include:
  - 91.7 acres of wetlands on Blount Island and 191 acres at DDA
  - Stormwater ponds and ditches on Blount Island
  - St. John's River shoreline
- Actions implemented focused on improving quality:
  - invasive species removal
  - protection from potential impacts





# *Wetlands and Riparian Areas*





# *Birds*

- 105 species of birds, including 29 breeding species, have been identified at MCSF-BI







- Actions implemented:
  - Improve existing habitat
  - Avoid of activities that would disrupt reproduction
  - Coordinate maintenance and construction to avoid disturbance in or adjacent to active nesting areas
  - Accommodate the habitat needs of migratory birds in the designs of future facilities.
  - Increase roosting and nesting habitat in stormwater ponds and the dredged material disposal site.



# *Wildlife Management*

- Alligators
  - 67 found in 2009 survey
  - 32 found in 2010
  - Warning signs posted in alligator habitat
  - Annual training on alligator procedures
- Snakes
  - Relocated from high traffic areas
  - May be killed if they would cause an unsafe work environment







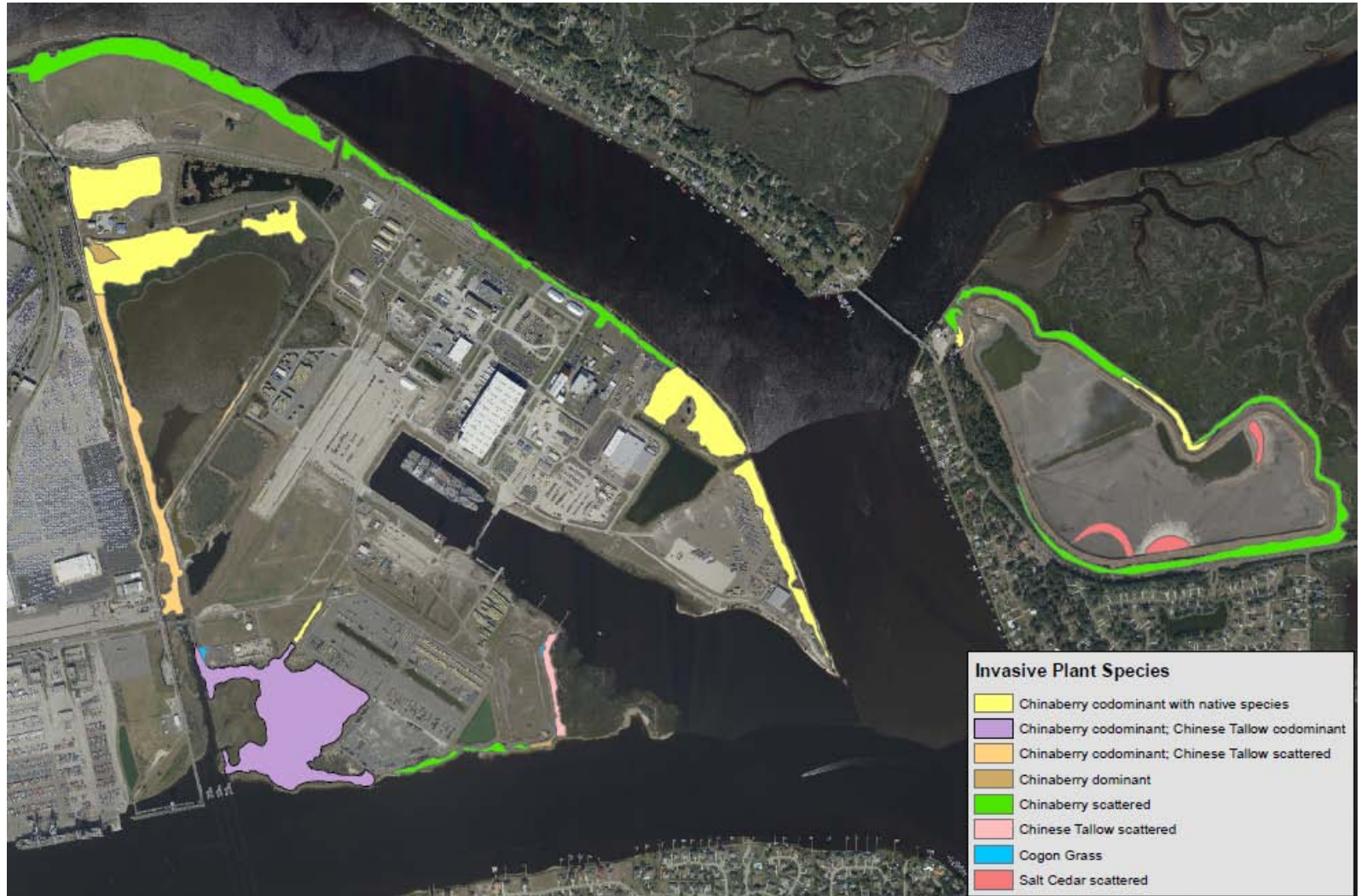
# *Invasive Plants*

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- Invasive plant surveys conducted on MCSF-BI and the DDA in 2008, 2009, and 2010.
  - Species include chinaberry, Chinese tallow, salt cedar, and cogon grass
- 70 acres of salt cedar killed at DDA to limit the potential to spread to adjacent areas
- Chinaberry trees removed from areas adjacent to the gopher tortoise burrows



# *Invasive Plants*





# *Sensitive Species*

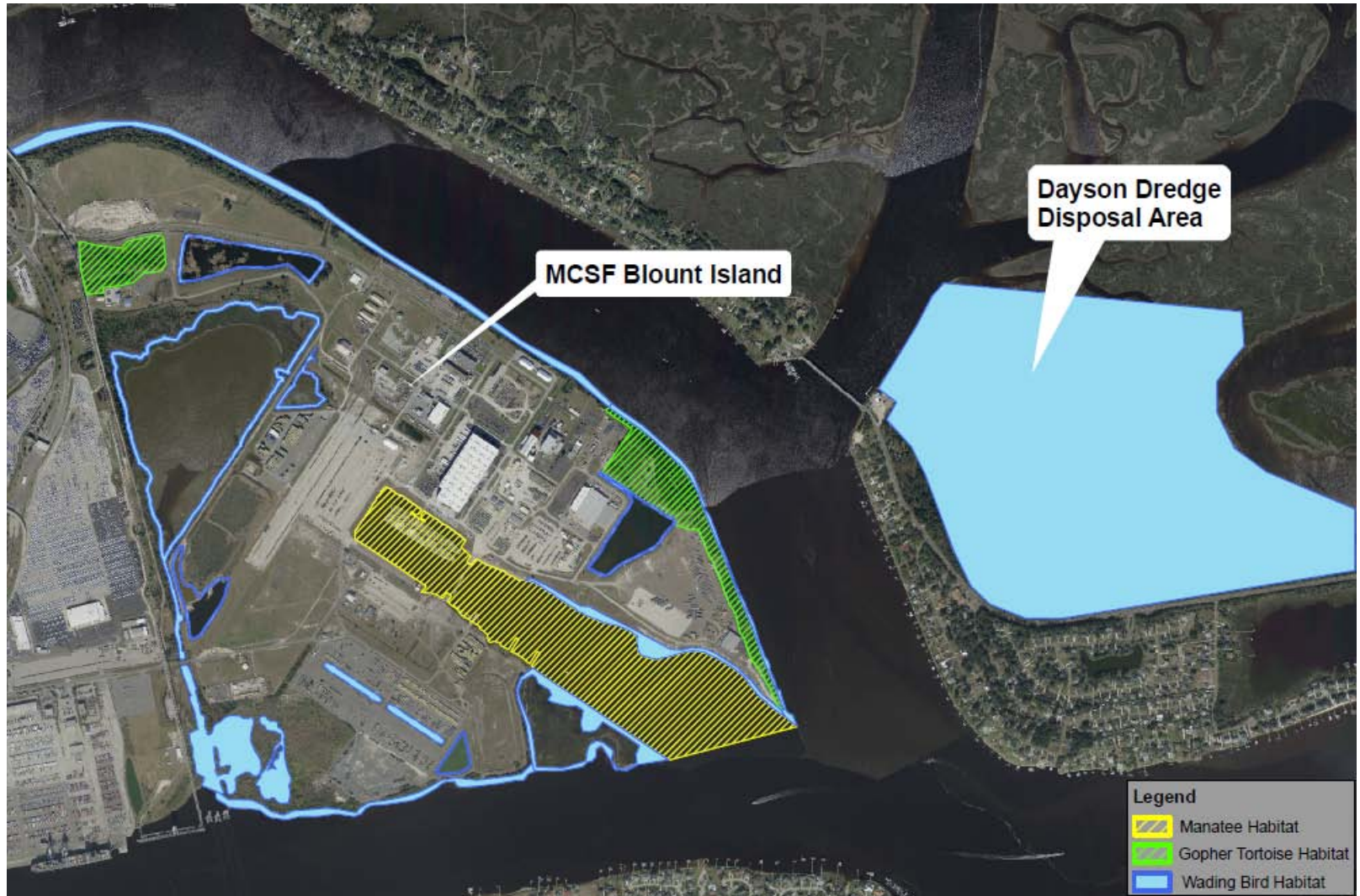
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- Surveys identified 15 federal or state-listed protected species
  - West Indian Manatee (FE)
  - Wood Stork (FE)
  - Other birds (primarily wading and shore)
  - American alligator (SAT)
  - Gopher tortoise (ST)





# *Sensitive Habitats*







# *Sensitive Species Management*

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- Actions implemented:
  - Avoidance and minimization of potential impacts
  - Habitat maintenance and enhancement
  - Monitoring and surveying to identify status, quality, trends and distribution
  - GIS-based tracking system of observances



# *Manatee*

- Manatees have been documented in the slipway at MCSF-BI





- Actions implemented include:
  - Install signage
  - Work instructions and training
  - Watch posted whenever activity will occur in slipway
  - Coordinate with FWC during ship movements





# *Gopher Tortoise*

- Active gopher tortoise burrows have been identified in undeveloped areas (e.g. 5 acre area of small original island)





# Gopher Tortoise

- Actions implemented include:
  - Signage posted to prevent vehicle traffic
  - Enhancement of desired vegetation
  - Removal of invasive vegetation







# 2011 Gopher Tortoise Survey







# *Gopher Relocation Project*

- Prepared EA
- Kickoff meeting
- 5 day survey the facility
  - 120 burrows found
  - 92 potentially occupied
- Submit dig permit
- 10 day relocation of all gopher tortoise to Appalachian national forest Tallahassee, FL





# *Rare Birds*

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- Rare birds observed primarily in stormwater ponds, ditches, and wetlands
- Wood storks have been observed in stormwater ponds and in DDA
- Protection and enhancement actions, including monitoring and surveys, are conducted as part of overall bird program



# *Environmental Planning*

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- Installation environmental staff works with base planners to accommodate the habitat needs of birds and sensitive species in the designs of future facilities.
- Developed new GIS data layers to aid in integration of natural resources program



# *Grounds Maintenance*

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- Accomplishments include development of natural resources information for grounds maintenance and landscaping staff
  - GIS layers identify off-limits areas
  - Signs mark boundaries and provide contact numbers
  - A map identifying jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional waters and the typical maintenance activities allowed within them





# *Grounds Maintenance*

## **Annual debris removal program along the St. Johns River shoreline initiated in 2008**

- 60 tires, 7 pounds of aluminum cans, approximately 20 tons of treated lumber, and 20 cubic yards of miscellaneous trash in 2008 and 2009
- Boy Scouts helped in 2010





# *Recreation*

- Limited recreation potential at MCSF-BI
- Recreational fishing
  - Designated areas approved for fishing by facility staff and dependents in 2007.
  - Authorized fishing areas are identified by signs
- Potential future use for bird watching





*Questions ?*

*US Marine Corps Support Facility*

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